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ABSTRACT

To meet the needs of ever-increasing enrollments, community colleges are using more part-time, or adjunct, instructors in lieu of full-time faculty. This practice has met with several problems, one of which is the sometimes uneasy relationship between full-time faculty and adjunct faculty. There is also the perception by some critics that employing a large number of part-time faculty undermines the integrity of the two-year college teaching profession. However, not enough research has been done to support this assertion. One survey, involving more than 1500 faculty from 127 community colleges in 41 states, identified similarities and differences in individual professional attitudes between full- and part-time faculty. Results were as follows: (1) part-time faculty showed lower levels of involvement in curriculum, instruction, and scholarship; (2) part-time faculty expressed significantly higher expectations for their students; (3) part-time faculty expressed significantly lower autonomy within their institutions; (4) there was no difference between professional attitudes between the two groups--both were equally committed to teaching and to students; (5) part-time faculty deviated significantly from full-timers in their sense of responsibility. Although the practice of integrating part-time and full-time faculty is currently problematic, it is a necessity for the survival of low-cost community college education. (Contains 16 references.) (EMH)

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# Adjunct Faculty In the Community College

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Community colleges are the most recently established educational institutions. As an institution, the community college allows each individual the opportunity to further his or her educational opportunities as far as interests and abilities permit. The increased educational opportunity has become a societal demand. Post secondary education has become a necessity, not a luxury. Because many financial, geographic, economic, social barriers have been removed from higher education, enrollment in the community colleges have increased. Although the actual number of community colleges is expected to remain stable, the number of students enrolled is expected to increase 20% between 1990 and 2000 (Gabert 10). To meet the needs of the ever increasing enrollments more part-time or adjunct faculty is being used to fulfill an increasing demand for instructors. The use of part-time, or adjunct faculty has become a polemical issue in community colleges.

There are a number of factors that have precipitated the need for more adjunct faculty in the community colleges. The typical age of the full-time community college instructor is 50 years old, with a minimum of 10 years of teaching experience, and has at least a master's degree (26). However, a serious shortfall of qualified community college instructors is predicted in the next decade and 40% of full-time faculty is expected to retire by the year 2000 (27). In California community colleges alone, one-third of the 15,000 full-time faculty are over 55 years old, and 55% are over 50. During the next ten years, approximately one-half of the professional staff will be replaced in the California community college system (Milliron and Leach 4). Community colleges will face a staffing challenge and must take into account the following factors:

1. Half of all undergraduates are enrolled in community colleges a significant percent of the professorate in higher education is employed in community college education.

2. Significant numbers of experienced community college faculty members will retire by the turn of the century and community colleges will be hiring many new full-time and part time faculty to fill instructional vacancies.

3. Most community colleges rely on part-time faculty members to teach a significant number of classes. The natural, and most appropriate source for future faculty members lies within the adjunct faculty.

4. Graduate students who want to teach at a community college are neither qualified nor prepared for those jobs.

(Engleberg 2-3)

The use of adjunct faculty is not just an issue in the future of community colleges. In a study conducted in 1990-1 at a large community college well over half of the faculty in every discipline were part-timers. Business, math, and technologies (a single division encompassing 16 separate fields, employed 50 full-time faculty and 120 part-timers; health careers and natural sciences had 7 full-time faculty and 15-25 part-timers; humanities and communications (27 program areas) had 31 full-time faculty and 130 part-timers (Gappa and Leslie 112). The profiles of other community colleges are similar.

Despite the apparent need to supplement full-time instructors with part-time instructors at the community colleges, it has been a contentious process. One problem has been the difficulty of defining "part-time" faculty. Positions are generally identified as FTSE's (Full-Time Student-Equivalents) rather than the number of people filling those positions. In addition, there are differences among different institutions with regard to their understanding of the term *part-time*. These differences may stem from their ability to identify the number of part-time faculty on the payroll, their willingness to release the information to outsiders, and the changes in the number of

institutions reporting the data (Spangler 7). An example of the difference in the definition of part-time faculty can be seen in the following comparison. The California Post-secondary Education Commission (CPEC) defines the phrase *part-time faculty* as those employed by a "short contract with no guarantee of being rehired for the next academic year or term" while the Modern Language Association classifies part-time faculty into two categories: (1) temporary members independent or "willing" because their position meets their individual needs, with full-time employment outside the institution teaching to satisfy a personal need or to share their expertise; and (2) those who teach from year to year and become "permanent" hoping to enter the ranks of full-time employment in higher education (8). Further confusion regarding the definition of part-time faculty involves the differences in meaning between part-time, temporary, and probationary faculty.

Adjunct faculty may be people highly professionalized in another field, graduate students waiting to complete their studies, and loosely affiliated teachers who commute from job to job (Cohen & Brawer 87). Community colleges find a major source of part-time faculty in the ranks of experienced teachers at the high school level. Many high school teachers moonlight for the satisfaction of teaching their subject at the college level to more highly motivated and focused students at the community college (Gabba and Leslie 120). Excluding the pay rate, the difference between full-time and part-time faculty becomes an issue of the number of hours spent teaching, holding office hours, correcting papers, assigning grades, attending meetings, doing committee work, and participating in staff development (7).

Funding and other economic considerations have complicated the use of adjunct faculty. Factors such as a state's, county's or other principality's low tax base, an increased reliance on state funds, and legislative funding and/or enrollment caps have affected community college staffing decisions. Community colleges are

monitored closely by state and public agencies to ensure that costs are controlled and money is spent efficiently. The California community college system, 107 colleges and 1.4 million students, accounts for 10% of all U.S. college students and is the largest system of higher education in the world (Burstein 1). A 1992 study by the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges revealed the following about the available revenue sources:

1. $2.8 billion dollars for the academic year 1992*

*funding numbers are approximate

2. $5.1 billion required for the colleges to meet the standards & mission set out by the Board of Governors.
3. Funding Gap: 2.3 billion. 82% more than what was available in the budget. (1)

One of the solutions the California community college system was faced with was in the area of personnel reductions which included not replacing vacancies created by the departure of faculty, staff and administrators and reducing many staff positions to part-time status.

The use of adjunct faculty has become the economic bargain of the last 20 years. By using adjunct faculty during a period of an ever shrinking pool of funding, community colleges have been able to maintain or increase educational access while their expenditures remain relatively low. In Fall 1992, Prince George's Community College used adjunct faculty to teach 40% of all class sections. Besides the lower per-hour salary, the cost of fringe benefits makes each full time faculty cost the college 130 % of salary per hour, while adjuncts cost 108% of their lower salary level (Cohen 3). The 383 adjunct faculty members employed at Prince George's Community College during the fall of 1992, made up 65% of the credit faculty. The flexibility of scheduling adjunct faculty allowed PGCC to experiment with alternative scheduling and waiting until the last minute to see how students respond (3). According to the American Association of Community Colleges, in Fall 1989, 63%, or 187,645 of nationwide

community college faculty were adjunct faculty (3). The ability to rely on adjunct faculty has provided the means to community colleges to continue to provide low-cost education.

Another issue caused by the use of adjunct faculty is the sometimes uneasy relationship between full-time faculty and adjunct faculty. One major cause of an uneasy relationship between the two faculty groups is a lack of clear administrative policies regarding hiring, retention, and management of adjunct faculty. Such policies must reflect the institution's need to meet enrollment swings, unexpected changes in demand for particular courses, or other last minute developments; as well as, the part-timer's need for a degree of stability in employment and clear notice regarding the terms and conditions of his or her employment without ignoring the requirements for fairness and equity (Biles and Tuckman 2-3).

There are other issues that requires a clear policy by community college administrations to avoid conflicts between full-time and part-time faculty. One issue can occur when adjunct faculty fail in their responsibilities and that failure must be absorbed by the regular faculty. One way to avoid this problem is for community college administrations to avoid scheduling sections of classes and filling them with students before there are teachers to teach them (Twigg 7). Another issue concerns the pretense of professional equality between adjunct and full-time staff when adjuncts are paid one-third of what full-time faculty is paid. Community college administrations must recognize that Pay clearly states worth (8) The exploitation of highly educated people who want to teach while legislators and administrators "solve" their financial problems by not paying teachers defies logic (9). A final issue that requires a clear administrative plan concerns the severely curtailed opportunities for tenure. Positions vacated by natural attrition have often been filled by adjunct faculty because it is cheaper. Full-time positions have become more scarce and the opportunity for

"permanent" part-time faculty to move into full-time positions have all but disappeared. If institutions began hiring full-time faculty to meet the continuing demand for their student load, the paranoia that has characterized higher education since the 1970's would diminish (8).

The differences in perception of part-time faculty duties by full-time faculty and part-time faculty can also affect the relationship between the two faculty groups. Full-time faculty at many community colleges believe that the presence of part-time faculty, (especially in discipline areas) is watering down the quality of academic instruction. The basis for their criticism is that part-time faculty are academically less prepared and have not earned enough professional credentials than full-time faculty. This perception may not be accurate. A study of the academic credentials held by 26 part-time faculty at a typical community college, found that two held a baccalaureate only, fifteen held a single master's degree, two had more than one master's, four had Ph.Ds, and one had an M.D. (Gappa and Leslie 33-34). A statement presented by the American Historical Association at its annual conference reported that adjunct faculty spent substantially less time on class preparation and out-of-class interaction with students than full-time faculty, and that the increasing use of adjunct faculty threatened responsible teaching as well as the intellectual community (American Historical Association).

The following chart, showing the characteristics of full and part-time instructional faculty at public two year colleges, reflects the current trends of full-time and part-time faculty. The differences between full and part-time faculty occur across age and highest degree earned.

| Highest degree | Full-time faculty | Part-time faculty |
|---|---|---|
| Doctoral | 16.6% | 8.1% |
| Professional | 2.3 | 5.1 |
| Master's | 63.9 | 53.0 |
| Bachelor's | 11.9 | 24.0 |
| Less than Bachelor's | 5.4 | 9.8 |
| **Age** | | |
| 29 or younger | 1.7% | 6.1% |
| 30 to 34 | 5.3 | 10.0 |
| 35 to 39 | 9.8 | 14.8 |
| 40 to 44 | 16.8 | 19.5 |
| 45 to 49 | 20.8 | 17.5 |
| 50 to 54 | 21.9 | 12.7 |
| 55 to 59 | 13.5 | 7.2 |
| 60 to 64 | 7.1 | 6.5 |
| 65 or older | 3.2 | 6.1 |

(EdInfo Number 97-12)

Twice as many full-time faculty have a doctorate, while twice as many part-time faculty have either a professional degree or a bachelor's degree. Fifty percent of part-time faculty teaching at two year institutions are 44 years of age or younger, while 63% of full-time faculty are 45 years or older (EdInfo).

Other critics of adjunct faculty use suggest that one disadvantage of employing a large number of part-time faculty is that the integrity of the two-year college teaching profession is undermined (Banachowski 2). However, there is a lack of consensus on how integrity is undermined. Some research does suggest that part-time faculty rely on traditional pedagogy and often fail to incorporate new methods of teaching (2).

This research, however, does not create a valid picture of reality.

Many full-time faculty at community colleges perceive lower-level (remedial and lower division) classes as not being worth their time, being easy to teach, and requiring little or no expertise. These courses require far more pedagogical expertise and skill than teaching more advanced subjects may require. However, part-time faculty teach the majority of those classes. During Spring 1990, in Los Angeles Valley College (LAVC) the following numbers illustrate the typical situation in community colleges: The basic writing courses (English 21, 28, and 101) showed a 47% to 53% ratio of full-to part-time; the literature classes show a 96% to 4% ratio; the ESL classes have a 50% to 5% ratio (Spangler 17). Data drawn from national studies of professional development programs shows that part-time faculty who engage in professional development activities use the same methods of teaching as full-time faculty (Banachowski 2).

A nationwide survey involving over 1500 faculty from 127 community colleges in 41 states identified similarities and differences in individual professional attitudes between full-time and part-time faculty. Respondents completed a questionnaire that surveyed five areas believed to illustrate the qualities and attitudes of professional persons: 1) knowledge acquisition [including integration, application, and practice]; 2) service ethic; 3) autonomy; 4) commitment to a calling; and 5) integrity (EdInfo Number 98-19). The data revealed the following results:

1. Part-time faculty showed significantly lower levels of involvement in curriculum, instruction, and scholarship.
2. Part-time faculty expressed significantly higher expectations for their students.
3. Part-time faculty expressed significantly lower autonomy within their institutions. Lower autonomy was due to perceived inequitable institutional policies regarding pay, benefits, and promotions.
4. There was no difference between professional attitudes between the two groups. Both groups were equally committed to teaching and to students.

5. Part-time faculty deviated significantly from full-timers in their sense of responsibility. This finding may be attributable to part-time faculty not being an integral part of the educational community.

(EdInfo Number 98-19)

Although a common perception about part-time faculty by full-time faculty is that they are less committed to good teaching and high academic standards, the survey results showed that attitude to be a misconception.

Adjunct faculty opinions about why they have continued part-time teaching also clarifies some of the misconceptions about part-time faculty. Two-thirds of 149 survey respondents at Prince George's Community College reported that "personal satisfaction" influenced their decision to teach at PGCC; One-third reported "acquisition of teaching experience for career purposes"; Only 15% of the respondents reported that the low salary for adjuncts was "a major source of income" (Cohen 4). In the same survey, the adjunct faculty reported on issues that were important to them.

**Importance of Services & Ineffectiveness of Services**

| (149 respondents) | **# found it important** | **% found PGCC ineffective** |
|---|---|---|
| **Assistance with improving teaching** | 85 | 30% |
| **Acknowledgement & recognition** | 88 | 30% |
| **Office space** | 72 | 25% |
| **Knowledge of resources available** | 107 | 21% |

(5)

The use of adjunct faculty is a fact of continued existence for the community college. By 2000, more than half the classes taught nationwide will be taught by adjuncts (Spangler 9). Community colleges must improve the salary and working conditions of part-time faculty in order to attract and retain the part-time faculty that they will need to fill necessary vacancies. Community colleges must also have strategies in

place that help to integrate adjunct faculty into their full-time faculty. One strategy is to reexamine the hiring practices of adjuncts.

1. No adjunct who is not fully qualified should be hired to teach credit courses.
2. Every fully qualified adjunct should be paid as much per course as a full-time counterpart would be.
3. Classes should not be offered to students unless qualified adjuncts have already been procured.
4. Wherever departments hire many adjuncts to teach regularly offered classes, they [departments] should be pressured to open up full-time positions (Twigg 10).

Other hiring practices to consider may include:

- Hire through an organized selection committee process.
- Modify budget practices so that class schedules can list instructors by name rather than "Staff"
- Generate and distribute information about policies, procedures, employment practices and their impact on student learning and the organization.
- Develop a contract that articulates the instructor's requirements and specifies his/her rights.
- Develop a meaningful orientation process at the institutional level that involves division heads, full-time faculty, workshops, and tours
- Offer a department-level orientation that includes a handbook, instructional information about teaching methods, course syllabi, and college resources.

(Spangler 27)

Another strategy to help ensure that qualified part-time faculty is available is the creation of a community college teacher certification program. The State Board of Directors for Community Colleges of Arizona requires that both full and part-time faculty be certified by the state board. The state board mandates specific qualifications for academic and occupational certificates that includes a specific number of completed semester hours and/or degrees; certain number of years of experience in certain occupational fields; and the completion of the Community College Course (State Board of Directors for Community Colleges of Arizona 3-6) Arizona is one of the few states in the U.S. that requires certification of its faculty.

Many community colleges are adopting faculty development programs to serve the special needs of part-time and evening faculty. In 1991, the Fullerton College faculty began a faculty development program to enhance the teaching in evening classes. The faculty development program included workshops on adult learners, learning styles, classroom assessment techniques, and interactive learning techniques (Alfano 2). Other programs adopted by some community colleges are aimed at developing the teaching skills of adjunct faculty with little or no previous teacher training. The Associate Program for Adjunct Instructors at the College of the Canyons (CA) consists of the following four steps:

1. One semester of college service
2. Completion of the Instructional Skills Workshop Training Series
3. Completion of an 8-10 hour Advanced Teaching Workshop which examines questioning techniques, writing across the curriculum, and critical thinking.
4. Classroom evaluation by colleagues and/or students (2)

Participants who successfully complete the program are advanced in rank to Adjunct Associate Instructor, with a 10% salary increase and a program stipend (2).

Although the practice of integrating part-time and full-time is currently problematic and sometimes controversial, it is a necessity for the survival of low-cost community college education. A combination of an expected shortage of qualified faculty and a significant increase in community college enrollment will require community colleges to bridge the barriers between full-time and part-time faculty in order to ensure quality instruction.

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